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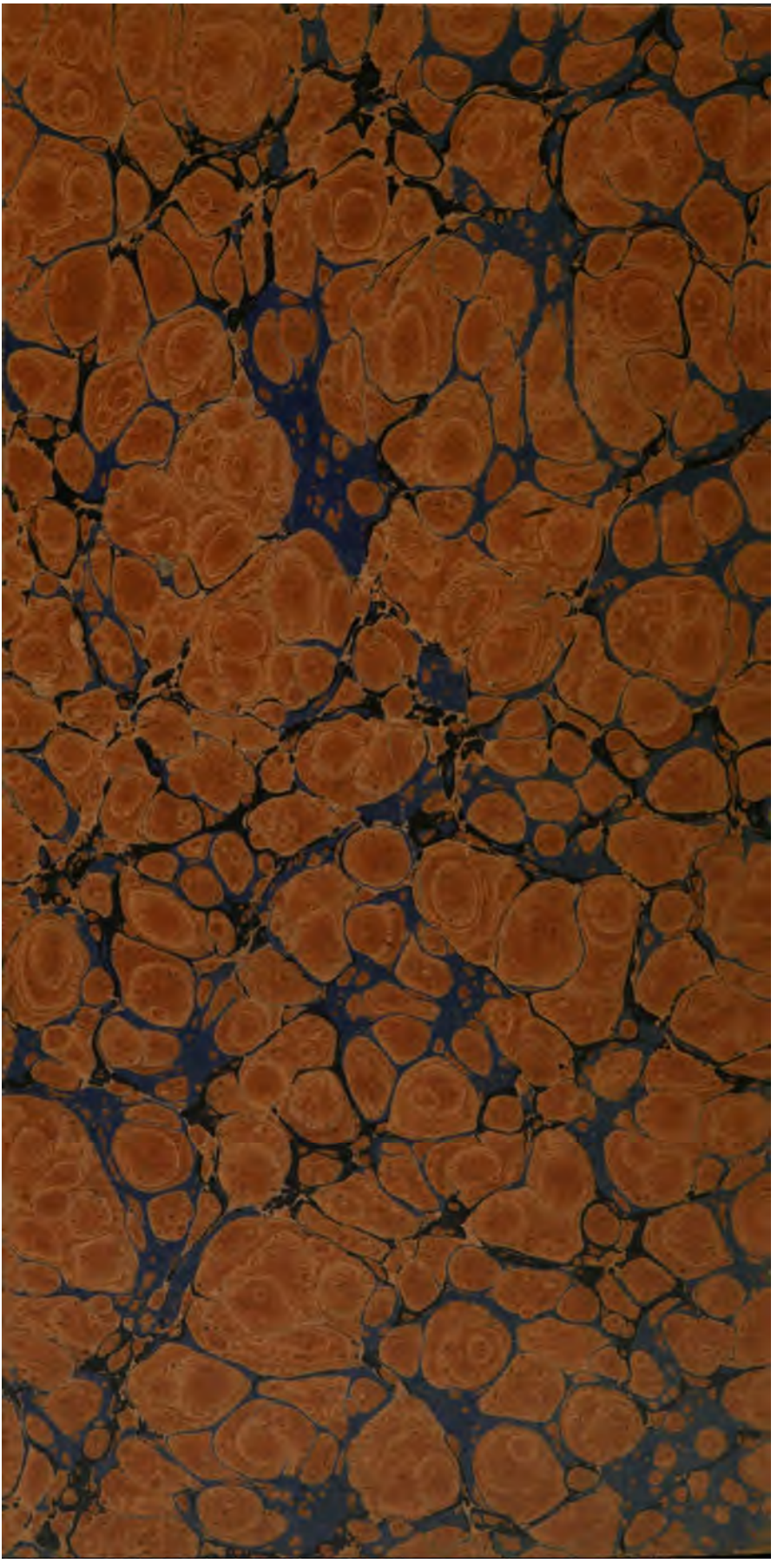

Fiedler J. 263

TAYLOR INSTITUTION
DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA

Fiedler J. 263

LEONORA:

A POEM,

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

MR. BÜRGER.

London:

PRINTED FOR HOOKHAM AND CARPENTER, OLD BOND-STREET.

1796.

TAYLOR INSTITUTION
UNIVERSITY
26 JUN 1951
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INTRODUCTION.

INGENIOUS and eccentric as is the petite Poem of LEONORA, by Mr. Bürger, no leſs than three tranſlations having been already uſhered to Public Notice, it may, perhaps, ſavour ſtrong of preſumption to attempt a fourth.—The Author's apology (like that of many other apologiſts) muſt be to declare, he had originally no other intention than to amuſe himſelf—flattered, however, by the opinion of friends who had peruſed the manuſcript, all-powerful vanity, ſo ſtrongly predominant in each ſuſceptible boſom, now prompts him to appear (a firſt offence) in print.

The attempt is daring, after ſuch brilliant ſucceſs has already crowned the efforts of Mr. Spencer's and Mr. Pye's genius—to the former, every tribute of applauſe has been already paid; nor does it require further eulogium.—Of the latter, all the author knows is from report, not being fortunate enough to have ſeen his production. To Mr. Stanley indeed, (whoſe tranſlation is the only one he had ſeen previous to the completion of his own) he is indebted for the explication of ſome, the moſt difficult paſſages in this work—his knowledge of the original being too ſuperficial without ſuch aſſiſtance.—Candour bids him ſay thus much; but at the ſame time, bids him preſume to aſſert, if he has taken the liberty to borrow *Mr. Bürger's meaning*, he has not piratically adopted the *language* of him

who ventured to ſtand forth a firſt tranſlator.

However deficient may be *his* knowledge of the language *allemande*, he feels an inclination to be perſuaded that, in ſome meaſure, the *ſpirit* of the original has been preſerved, if not ſtrictly the *letter*—or at leaſt ſome portion of its eccentricity, which indiſputably is its principal beauty.

Thoſe repetitions (to which with juſtice may be applied the *decies repetita placebit* of Horace) are conſpicuouſly in that ſtyle of writing, and give no ſmall *eclat* to the whole compoſition—doubtleſs the author here piqued himſelf on having ſtepped beyond the boundaries of ſober ſenſe, and ſoared with true poetic enthuſiaſm into ſuch exclamations as well befit the character he pourtrays.

A Taſte for the terrible, moſt of us have imbibed in the nurſery—how few are proof againſt the griſly charms of a ghoſt—a dæmon or an apparition! Theſe Ideal phantoms, Mr. Bürger ſeems to have perſonified with no inconſiderable degree of ſucceſs.—This introduction however, not being intended as a preface to the poem, but only as the tranſlator's apology, he thus cuts ſhort all further comment, indulging the fond hope that, though laſt on the liſt of LEONORA'S devotees, he may have the gratification to find he is not the leaſt.

LEONORA.

FAIR Leonora's ſlumbers o'er,
Foreboding ills, ſhe left her bed;
" William," ſhe cry'd, " I view no more,
" I dreamt he was untrue, or dead."
At Prague's fam'd Battle William fought,
Where vict'ry gallant Fred'rick taught;
But if that fate-fraught day he fell,
Or 'ſcap'd the conflict, none could tell.

Pruſſia's conqueſt-glutted King,
And Hungary's ill-fated Queen,
Tir'd of Contention ling'ring,
By treaty now had clos'd the ſcene.
As joyous home, the armies ſteer'd,
With laugh and ſong their march they cheer'd;
The drum's loud notes, the trumpet's bray,
And cymbal's craſh beguil'd the way.

With garlands crown'd, or oaken bough,
As gay with hope they march'd along;
Each neighb'ring town, and hamlet too,
Pour'd forth to meet them, old and young.
Thank God! the liſping infants ſaid,
Sires ſeiz'd their crutch, and left their bed,
Whilſt many a youth, and many a maid,
With heart-felt glee, their welcomes paid.

But ah! poor Leonora's fate
Forbad the greeting kiſs to ſhare,
Of William---her long-choſen mate,
No voice could tell, or tidings bear:
Frantic with grief, ſhe rav'd aloud,
Amidſt the ſympathiſing crowd;
'Till ſunk at length in deep deſpair,
Swooning and ſenſeleſs fell the Fair.

Her Mother caught her in her arms,
And tenderly eſſay'd to ſooth;
" In God's name ceaſe theſe wild alarms,
" Nor longer mourn the treach'rous youth.
" Mother, ſhe cry'd, my fate is hard,
" Heaven hath deny'd my ſole regard,
" Poor William---dead---for ever gone,---
" Here let me weep and make my moan."

" Be merciful, ye Pow'rs above!
" Profane not them my deareſt Child;
" Your pray'rs to pity yet might move;
" Then fruitleſs rave not thus ſo wild."
" Oh mother, mother, pray'rs are vain,
" Ne'er ſhall I view my Love again.
" Heav'n will ne'er propitious hear
" A wretch beneath its guardian care."

" For God's ſake, ſtop that impious tongue,
" Have faith in him to give relief;
" Complaint is folly----ever wrong,
" And aggravates---not ſoftens grief."
" Oh Mother, Mother, faith betrays,
" No faith again the Dead can raiſe.
" Nought can recall the paſt event,
" Vain were the wiſh---as vain th' attempt."

" How know you, child, but ſtill he ſtrays
" A faithleſs wanderer afar?
" Faithleſs he lives, his flight betrays,
" And you forlorn, no more his care.
" Then---Oh, deſpiſe his perfidy,
" His plighted faith, all perjury;
" Forbear to grieve---forbid your tears,
" William is falſe, it now appears."

" Oh Mother, Mother, Hope is fled,
" Nought can recall the paſt event,
" Our God's unjuſt---and William dead;
" Sure I was born for puniſhment.
" How I abhor and loath the day,
" The hated ſun be far away;
" Welcome I graſp the hand of Death,
" Life I abjure—abjure my Faith."

" Father of Heav'n !---O lend thine ear,
" Snatch from Deſpair---compoſe her mind;
" Her intellects are loſt, I fear,
" Deaf to advice, to reaſon blind.
" For future bliſs, my child, reſign
" Each worldly wiſh, nor longer pine
" At ill-requited love.---I pray
" Have faith, and Heav'n ſhall point the way."

" Oh, mother! tell me what is Hell?
" Oh tell me what is Heaven too?
" William, alas! I lov'd ſo well,
" He falſe 'twere Hell;---but Heav'n if true:
" For ever vaniſh loathed day,
" To blackeſt night, my ſoul away:
" Love has entirely flown my breaſt,
" No longer Hope, a harbour'd gueſt."

Thus Leonora in deſpair,
Her impious plaints did oft repeat;
She oft' times wept, oft tore her hair,
And oft her ſnowy boſom beat.
On Death ſhe call'd to give relief;
The moon and ſtars beheld her grief,
And ſilent as they glimmer'd high,
Huſh'd to repoſe, the weary'd eye.

But hark! what means that craſh of noiſe,
Rattling fierce onward to the gate---
A horſe it ſeems---and hark! a voice
Proclaims ſome traveller ſo late.
Hark! hark! the bell---the reſtleſs maid,
All panic-ſtruck, forſakes her bed;
But ſoon a voice ſalutes the ear,
Bids Hope reſume the place of Fear.

" Holla! Holla! Awake---ariſe---
" Lov'd Leonora, doſt thou ſleep?
" William ſhall greet thy longing eyes,
" He comes, his ſacred vow to keep."
" Ah William, you---my ſoul's delight,
" Whence come you at this dead of night?
" I hope thou'rt well, and far from harm,
" Oh ſpeak and quiet my alarm."

" At midnight, have I travell'd home,
" E'en from Bohemia's diſtant land;
" For thee, my dear, in haſte I come,
" To claim thy long-betrothed hand."
" For me you come? then prythee ſtay;
" You would not, William, haſte away;
" The winds loud howl, and threaten harms,
" Come warm thee in my longing arms."

" Loud howl the winds, and tempeſts roar---
" I'm call'd by Duty to be gone---
" My Time is ſhort---I can no more---
" Haſte, mount my horſe, and let us on---
" Let the winds howl o'er hill and dale;
" E're the pale moon-beam's light ſhall fail,
" This night an hundred miles at leaſt
" We'll ride---t'enjoy the nuptial feaſt."

" An hundred miles! Ah, would you ride?
" At midnight too---it cannot be---
" Here ſtay and take me for your Bride."
" I tell thee, Love, 'tis Fate's decree.
" Look round and round—bright ſhines the Moon,—
" Hard ride the Dead---we'll gallop on---
" Come, come, you muſt not be afraid,
" This night we'll reach our bridal bed."

" Oh, tell me, whither would you go?
" Oh, ſay, where ſeek this bridal bed?"
" Far---far from hence, you'll quickly know
" 'Tis quiet---cold---and ſmall indeed—
" Of ſix planks only is it made,
" Start not—my will muſt be obey'd.
" Come mount—we muſt be off in haſte,
" Or diſappoint the wedding gueſt."

Eager around her William's waiſt,
Her arms ſhe threw, and leap'd behind—
Her lily hands the youth embrac'd,
Away they ſped—more fleet than wind---
As in full ſpeed, they rattled off,
O'er flints, o'er hillocks, ſmooth and rough!—
Fire from his Charger's footſteps broke,
And each broad noſtril iſſu'd ſmoke.

As link'd around his waiſt, ſhe rode,
Headlong he flogg'd his foaming Steed—
Like Lightning ſwift—as Thunder loud,
He ſcal'd the rock, or ſkim'd the mead.
" Bright ſhines the Moon—fear not," he cry'd,
" Hurrah! the Dead like furies ride—
" My love—thou canſt not fear the Dead?
" Ah, me! how talk'ſt thou of the Dead?

Now onward as they puſh'd their way,
A fun'ral check'd their mid career;
Loud toll'd the bell—they chaunt, they pray;
The ſolemn ceremony's near.
Lo, yonder coffin—ſee the pall
Upborne by friends—and laſt of all,
Mourners and prieſts fill up the ſcene,
In ſad proceſſion o'er the green.

With voice impetuous and bold,
William addreſs'd the drowſy prieſt---
" Look up---my lovely bride, behold---
" Haſte wed us here---'tis my requeſt---
" Come run the marriage ritual through;
" That done---we'll have ſome chaunting too,
" Then homewards will we hie away,
" And conſummate ere dawn of day."

Both ſong and ſervice at an end,
Slowly the corpſe proceeded on,
When William gave his horſe the rein,
In fury ſnorting to be gone---
Impetuous forward ſprang the ſteed,
Now o'er the rock, and now the mead---
His raging hoofs, Fire flaſh'd beneath,
And Smoke, his glowing noſtrils breathe.

This way and that---and all around,
Each object dancing to the eye---
Spires---caſtles---rocks, and many a town,
In ſwift ſucceſſion glided by.---
" Bright ſhines the moon---fear not," he cry'd,
" Hurrah! the Dead like furies ride;---
" My Love, thou doſt not fear the Dead?"
" Oh no---but mention not the Dead."

See there aghaſt! where gleams the moon,
A groupe of ſprites and elves appear---
In union link'd, they gambol on,
And ſpread around diſtaſtrous fear.---
But fearleſs William's Stentor voice,
Cries---" Hither haſte—ye air-bred boys---
" Spirits and goblins follow us,
" And dance ye at my wedding thus."

Like Whirlwinds darting from on high,
The Phantoms haſten to obey;
More ſwift than leaves in autumn fly,
They mutter gibberiſh---and away---
Impetuous William preſs'd his Steed
Now o'er the rock---and now the mead---
His raging hoofs, Fire flaſh'd beneath,
And Smoke his glowing noſtrils breathe.

In ſpeed, he thus outſtripp'd the World,
As o'er the heath-clad hills they flew---
The Moon ſeem'd from her orbit hurl'd---
Each ſtarry ſphere in motion too.---
" Bright ſhines the Moon---Fear not," he cry'd,
" Hurrah! the Dead like furies ride---
" My Love! thou can'ſt not fear the Dead?"
" Ah, William! wherefore name the Dead."

" But hark! the Cock his Matins ſings--
" Methinks I ſcent the morning air"---
" The ſand is out---Fate give me wings---
" Our race is nearly run, my Dear---
" Away,---like Meteors on we glide---
" Hurrah! the Dead like furies ride---
" The work is done, the Fates have plann'd---
" Lo, there---the bridal bed at hand."

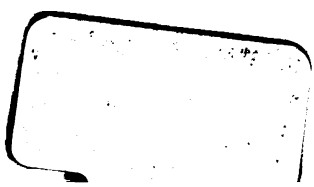
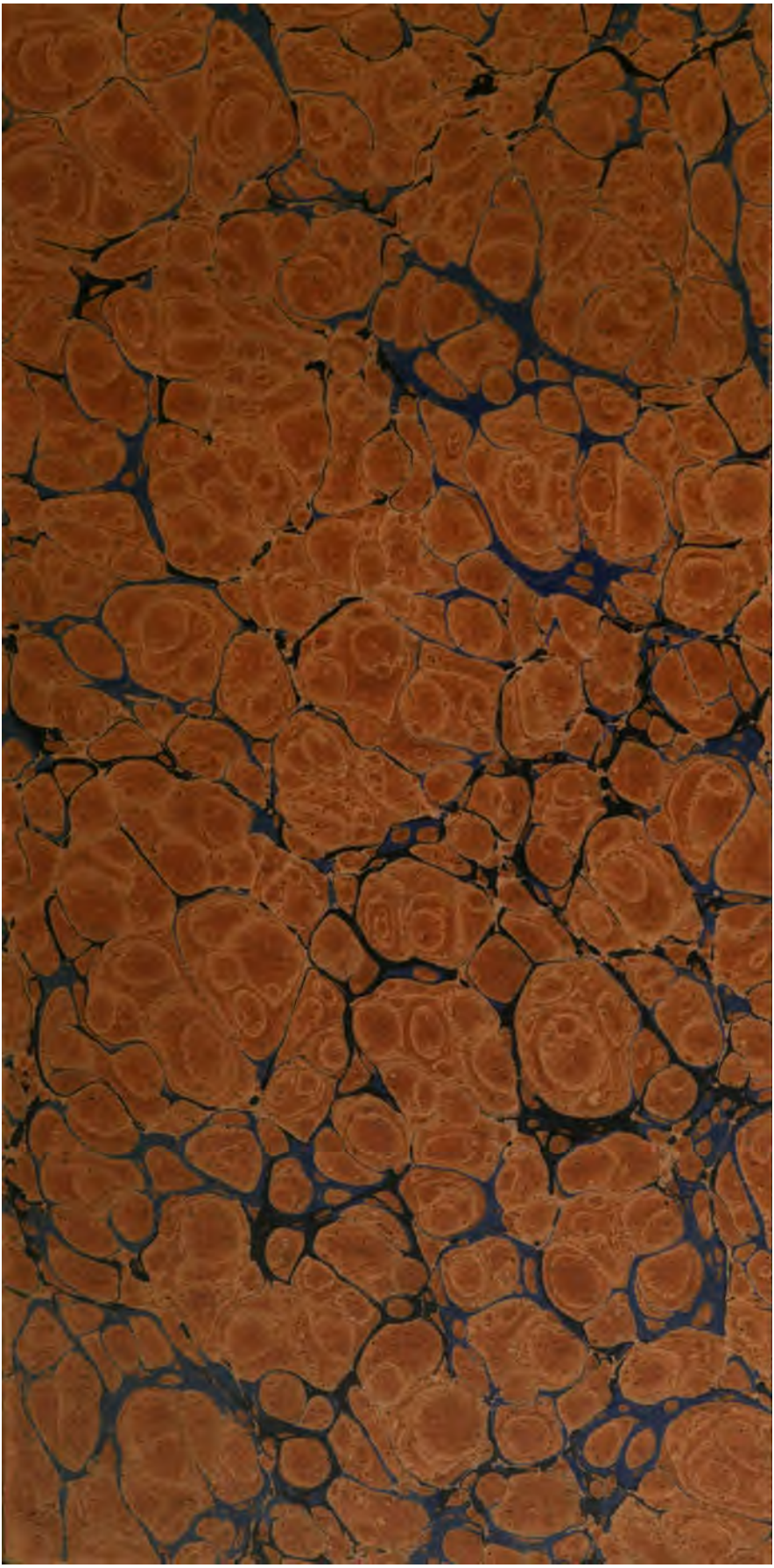
A church-yard's iron Portals near,
T' admiſſion frown'd denial—
But charging on in mad career,
Dauntleſs he made the trial.---
Fierce was the blow---loud rung the door—
The pond'rous bolts, are bolts no more—
And as the grating hinges turn'd,
Death's gloomy manſions they diſcern'd.

In part obſcur'd, the glimm'ring Moon,
Diſplay'd the ſad ſepulchral ſight—
As paſſing on by many a tomb,
A yawning grave ſtopp'd ſhort their flight—
" Ah ha!" cry'd William—" is it here?"
Claſping the Maid, half dead with fear—
" Know this—by Heav'n it is decreed,
" Here we ſhould find our marriage bed."

Oh horror! how ſhall I relate
The ſequel—marvellous and ſtrange!—
His form ſo faultleſs but of late,
Inſtant aſſum'd a ghaſtly change.
Shrunk to a ſkeleton he ſeem'd—
His eyes no more with ſpirit gleam'd.
The death-like frame embrac'd the Maid,
Then ſunk to earth, a lifeleſs Shade.

All flaſhing Fire and Smoke around,
Th' ætherial Charger ſnorted high ;---
Then fell in Thunder to the ground,
And ſudden vaniſh'd from the eye.—
Alas! poor Leonora view—
Down—down ſhe fell—expiring too.—
The Sprites deſcend—around her flutter,
Whilſt o'er the myſtic rites they mutter.—

By the faint glimpſes of the Moon,
They dance around with horrid yell—
She hears a dread terrific groan,
Loud echo from the depths of Hell—
The Fiends with taunts malignant, cry,
" Thy race is run—prepare to die;
" Be ever thus the doom of all ;
" May horror thus, their Souls appall,

" Who dare the wrath of Heav'n provoke;
" Its juſt deciſions dare arraign---
" Didſt thou to God for favour look,
" He'd raiſe thy ſinking Soul again.—
" If in the hour of ſad diſtreſs,
" On God thou call'ſt, thy God ſhall bleſs—
" Shall arm with *patience* to endure,
" And *Hope's perſpective joys* enſure."

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